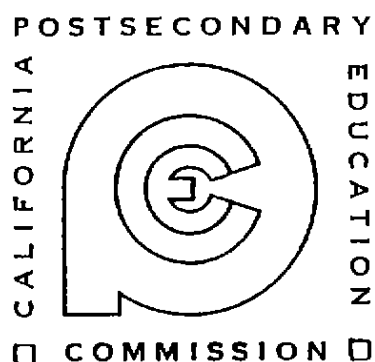
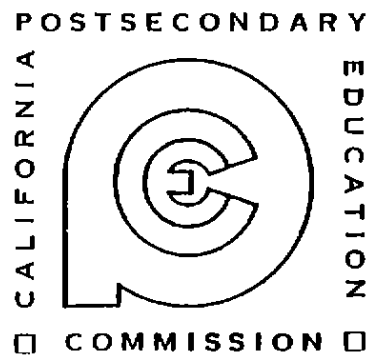


**RESPONSE TO REQUEST
FROM THE STATE BOARD
OF EDUCATION REGARDING
THE SCREENING OF APPLICANTS
TO TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMS**



**CALIFORNIA POSTSECONDARY
EDUCATION COMMISSION**

RESPONSE TO REQUEST FROM THE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
REGARDING THE SCREENING OF APPLICANTS
TO TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMS



A Staff Report to the
CALIFORNIA POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION COMMISSION
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INTRODUCTION

At its March 7, 1984, meeting, the Master Plan Committee of the California State Board of Education considered an item on teacher quality described in the Committee's agenda as follows (Item E, p. 2):

It has been suggested repeatedly by members of this committee and others that passing the CBEST [California Basic Educational Skills Test] be made a condition for admission to any teacher training program in California requiring a bachelor's degree. Some programs in California are now in the process of advocating this as an admission requirement. Should the Master Plan Committee now take some action on this and, if so, what can it do to make this a minimum requirement for all such programs?

Following discussion, it was moved, seconded, and carried unanimously that the Committee recommend that the full Board refer "the question of screening applicants to teacher education programs, including the possibility of requiring diagnostic tests of all applicants . . . to the California Post-secondary Education Commission" (Minutes, Item E, p. 4).

On March 8, the State Board of Education approved this motion and added specific reference to the California Basic Educational Skills Test, with the appropriate clause expanded to read, "including the possibility of using diagnostic tests and the CBEST for all applicants . . ." (State Board of Education Minutes, March 8, 1984, p. 12).

The Board's request to the Commission raises the following questions regarding admissions criteria and the use of tests for diagnostic versus screening purposes in the credential programs within California's public postsecondary institutions:

1. Do colleges and universities currently screen applicants to their teacher education programs?
2. If so, what are the criteria used for admission?
3. Are standardized tests among the criteria used to screen applicants?
4. Is the California Basic Educational Skills Test used by any institution as a screening device?
5. Are any standardized tests, including the CBEST, used for diagnostic purposes for students prior to entry into or during their teacher training programs?

6. Should use of more rigorous admissions criteria be recommended to institutions?
7. And should changes be recommended in the uses of the California Basic Educational Skills Test or the use of other standardized tests for teacher credential candidates?

BACKGROUND

Teacher preparation, credentialing, and licensure are labyrinthian, often controversial, areas that defy simple summary statements, but some basic facts are necessary to set the context for the questions.

The eight general campuses of the University of California and all 19 campuses of the California State University offer professional courses leading to one or more teaching or service credentials through schools, centers, divisions, or departments of education.

Teaching credentials can be classified into multiple subject, single subject, designated subject, and specialist credentials, while service credentials include administrative services, health services, librarianship, pupil-personnel, school psychologist, and others. This report focuses on requirements for the multiple subject and single subject credentials only, as these programs generally attract the largest number of applicants

In 1982-83, nearly 600 students completed multiple subject or single subject credential programs at the University, whereas over ten times that number completed such programs at the State University. Since the Donahoe Higher Education Act of 1960 gave the California State University the major responsibility for the preparation of teaching professionals, it is not surprising that the State University prepares an estimated 65 percent of all teachers educated in California (Advisory Committee, 1982, p. III-10).

The basic requirements for teaching credentials in California are set forth in the Teacher Preparation and Licensing Law of 1970 (Ryan Act). This law established the Commission on Teacher Credentialing, formerly the Commission on Teacher Preparation and Licensing, which is responsible for approving professional preparation programs in education and thus issues a number of regulations influencing both the structure and content of teacher preparation curricula. In 1982, the Advisory Committee for the Study of Programs in Education of the California State University took exception to such external influences: "The increasing intrusion into teacher preparation decreases the autonomy of schools of education and their institutions to define professional education. It precludes planned and professionally defined change for the improvement of the preparation of teacher educators" (ibid., p. I-6).

Despite these perceived restrictions, institutional decisions about admission to teacher preparation programs remain amazingly free of external constraint. The Commission on Teacher Credentialing stipulates only that "the requirements for admission to the program (including grade point average) should be at

least comparable to requirements for other areas of professional study at the institution" (1980, p. 3). Such decentralization exists as well within the University of California and the California State University, as is evident in the answers to the following questions:

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1. Do colleges and universities currently screen applicants to their teacher education programs?
2. If so, what are the criteria used for admission?

California's public colleges and universities do screen applicants to their teacher education programs, but they use diverse criteria of varied rigor.

In the University of California, admission to credential programs falls under the purview of the Coordinating Council of Graduate Affairs, a system-wide committee which has set a 3.0 minimum grade point average for entrance to the University's education programs. Anecdotal evidence indicates, however, that exceptions are made to this requirement on some campuses. In addition, each campus has its own Teacher Education or School of Education Committee that establishes other requirements for admission. At the University of California, Davis, for example, the Education Department imposes the following additional requirements on its students (University of California, Davis, 1983, p. 1):

I. Pre-Program Requirements

- A.(1) 3 quarters (or 2 semesters) of any upper- or lower-division English course work
- (2) English 103 (any section, A-F)
- B Education 110
- C. Education 120, or 122, or 123
- D P.E. 44 and P.E. 44L
- E. Constitution requirement - college-level course or exam
- F. Field experience requirement
- G. UCD breadth requirements
- H.(1) Math course requirement
- (2) Math Competency Exam
- I. A personal interview

- II. Diversified Pattern: This Pattern uses much of your major, as well as other course work; it is not a major.

or

State-approved Exam: Please get the necessary information/application from the Education Department.

III. California Basic Educational Skills Test for Teachers (CBEST)
 Individuals entering approved California credential programs must take CBEST for diagnostic purposes prior to the deadline for application for admission.

You must have passing scores on this exam before you can be issued a teaching credential.

Such requirements differ from campus to campus in the University, but no centralized source of information about them exists. In the State University, on the other hand, the Chancellor's Office maintains detailed and current data about requirements for admission to the education programs on each of its campuses. These data were initially accumulated during the work of the State University's Advisory Committee for the Study of Programs in Education during 1980-82, and now inform the work of several other advisory committees established to implement the reforms recommended by the parent-group.

As of April 1984, the admission requirements listed in Table 1 were in effect on the 19 State University campuses:

TABLE 1 ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS TO TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMS IN THE CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, APRIL 1984

<u>Campus</u>	<u>GPA</u> ¹	<u>Pass</u> ² <u>CBEST</u>	<u>Dept</u> <u>Approval</u>	<u>Letters</u> <u>of</u> <u>Recommen-</u> <u>dation</u>	<u>Interview</u>	<u>Prior</u> <u>Experience</u>
Bakersfield	2.5 Overall 2.75 Last 90	PT	NR ³	(6)	Required	Required
Chico	2.5	AD	Required	(3)	Required	NR
Dominguez Hills	Upper 1/2	AD	NR	Yes	Required	Required
Fresno	2.75	PT	NR	NR	NR	NR
Fullerton	2.75 M	AD	NR	NR	NR	Required
Hayward	3.00 S 2.75	PT	If other requirements not met	NR	If other requirements not met	NR
Humboldt	--	--	--	--	--	--
Long Beach	2.75	PT	NR	NR	NR	Required
Los Angeles	2.5	PT	NR	NR	NR	NR
Northridge	2.5	AD	Required before	(4)	If other requirements not met	NR
Pomona	2.75	Exit	NR	Yes	Required	Required
Sacramento	2.5	Exit	NR	(3)	Required	Required
San Bernardino	2.6 last 90	Exit	NR	(3)	Required	NR
San Diego	--	--	--	--	--	--
San Francisco	2.5	PT	NR	NR	NR	Required
San Jose	2.75 Upper 1/2	AD	NR	NR	Required	Recommended
San Luis Obispo	2.8	PT	NR	(4)	NR ^c	NR ^c
Sonoma	2.5	AD	Required	NR	Required	NR
Stanislaus	2.75 M 3.00 S (major)	AD	Required	NR	Required	NR

¹ GPAs are already established or formally proposed

² PT = practice teaching, AD = Admission, Exit = recommendation for credential

³ NR = no response and not required. Some campuses failed to mention specific requirements, others did not include the requirement in a formal list

Source: Chancellor's Office, The California State University.

At the May 23, 1984, meeting of the Board of Trustees Committee on Educational Policy, Chancellor Reynolds announced that by Fall 1985, however, teacher preparation programs may admit candidates "only from the upper 50 percent of students . . . with good command of basic skills, satisfactory performance in a relevant supervised experience, and successful completion of a formal review process requiring recommendations from the major department as to the competency of the individual in the subject matter that he or she will teach . . . and interviews that assess personal qualities and communication skills . . ." (State University News Release 84-33).

According to Chancellor's Office staff, raising admission standards may initially be a problem for some campuses but will ultimately improve the calibre of graduates and of the profession itself.

3. Are standardized tests among the criteria used to screen applicants?

Not generally, except for the California Basic Educational Skills Test, which is described more fully later in this report.

Despite the diversity of admissions criteria used to screen applicants to teacher education programs, standardized testing is not widely employed. The University of California and the California State University use standardized tests in English and mathematics for students already admitted to both systems at the lower division level, and many campuses also have an exit writing requirement before the baccalaureate degree. Teacher education candidates who have received their undergraduate preparation at a University or State University campus will, therefore, have been tested for these basic skill competencies, although this is not necessarily true for those students who attended a Community College and then transferred.

At the post-baccalaureate level, most graduate and professional degree programs generally depend upon scores from such standardized tests as the Graduate Record Examination, the Law School Admissions Test, and the Medical College Aptitude Test to screen applicants to their schools or programs. Except for one or two specialized programs, similar practice does not exist for teacher education candidates in California. Although students who lack certain requirements must take and pass one of the National Teacher Examinations (25 Specialty Area tests, the Professional Knowledge test, the General Knowledge test, or the Communication Skills test), in order to receive the credential, this test is not generally used for screening applicants before they may enter a program.

The matter of testing for admission to teacher education programs is complicated by the fact that students may complete a credential program either while completing a baccalaureate degree or after completing the degree. A preliminary credential is given for the former experience and a clear credential for the latter. In some cases, then, the credential program is not a graduate program, and use of a graduate or professional school test becomes problematic.

In summary, then, standardized tests are not generally part of the admissions criteria for a teacher education program in California. The California Basic Educational Skills Test stands as the lone and very large exception to this practice.

4. Is the California Basic Educational Skills Test used by any institution as a screening device?

Yes, as Table 1 showed, seven campuses of the California State University currently use this test to screen applicants, and another seven use it before students may begin practice teaching. In addition, the University of California, Davis, will use it by Fall 1985 to screen applicants.

5. Are any standardized tests, including the California Basic Educational Skills Test, used for diagnostic purposes for students prior to entry into or during their teacher training program?

All campuses of the University and the State University employ the California Basic Educational Skills Test for diagnostic purposes, as mandated by law. Unfortunately, however, the test was not designed as a diagnostic tool, and there are serious shortcomings in its use as such, despite the provisions of the law. Other standardized tests are not used for diagnostic purposes, save for those that may have been given to teacher candidates when they were first admitted as undergraduates to the University of California or to the California State University.

Established in 1981 by Assembly Bill 757, Chapter 1136, the California Basic Educational Skills Test seeks to measure basic proficiency in reading, writing, and mathematics before initial certification or issuance of an additional credential by the Commission on Teacher Credentialing. The test was developed by Educational Testing Service and was first given in December 1982. When the scores were released, they showed great divergence among the institutions attended and among ethnic groups. In 1983, Senate Bill 1225, Chapter 536, exempted certain authorizations and added a requirement that each applicant take the test for diagnostic purposes "no later than the deadline for the submission of his or her application for entrance to the credential program." In fact, the Commission on Teacher Credentialing may not approve a teacher education program unless the institution requires that the test be taken as the law mandates.

The use of the California Basic Educational Skills Test as a diagnostic tool is troubling to many educators. According to staff at Educational Testing Service, it was not developed as a diagnostic test. In a report on this issue, recently prepared for the Commission on Teacher Credentialing, Richard Watkins states that greater demands are made on a test used for diagnosis than for determining proficiency, since such a test must "yield reliable measurement over a continuum of skill or ability and provide reliable scores

on several reasonably different skills, and subskills." More testing time is needed for this kind of test, particularly if the group to be tested is very heterogeneous, as is the group taking the CBEST. The Watkins report concludes that the California Basic Educational Skills Test can make only the most general predictions about outcomes and cannot be used for prescription except with other relevant information.

Concerns have also been expressed by campus and administrative personnel about use of the CBEST as a screening device as well as for diagnosis. Problems exist, they say, with the test's construction and with the reporting mechanism. For example, since test scores cannot be released to a campus without the test-taker's permission, the campuses must depend in some instances on self-reported scores.

Public interest in quality education and teacher testing makes use of any standardized test for teacher candidates or incumbents a seductive notion. Indeed, state teacher competency testing may be considered a movement of monumental proportions, having grown from three programs in 1977 to 30 (including California) in Fall 1983. In a survey prepared by J. T. Sandefur, dean of the College of Education at Western Kentucky University, 12 other states report planning or serious discussion about teacher testing, while only eight report no activity at all. Of the 30 states with approved testing programs, 17 test for admission to teacher training programs, primarily in basic or professional skills. Few of the 30 states are using legislative action to mandate competency assessment, relying instead on state department of education regulations, and few are developing their own tests, relying instead on nationally standardized ones.

6. Should use of more rigorous admissions criteria be recommended to institutions?
7. And should changes be recommended in the uses of the California Basic Educational Skills Test or the use of other standardized tests for teacher credential candidates?

Because of the differences in kind and in rigor among the criteria used for admission to teacher preparation programs by campuses even within the same system, the lack of any centralized information about the teacher preparation programs in the University of California, and the problems in using the California Basic Educational Skills Test both as a screening device and a diagnostic instrument, Commission staff recommends to the Commission that a meeting be convened to share admissions information among and within the segments, to discuss the need for change in current practice and policy, and to begin to resolve other issues identified in this report. The State Board of Education and the Commission on Teacher Credentialing should be closely involved in this project, and independent institutions that prepare teachers for the State's public schools should be invited to participate.

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